

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7128
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, EG, KU
SUBJECT: KUWAITI REACTION TO UNREST IN EGYPT

1. THERE HAS BEEN ONLY ONE OFFICIAL GOK PUBLIC REACTION TO RECENT UNREST IN EGYPT; ON JAN. 22 THE FONMIN TOLD THE PRESS: "THANK GOD MATTERS HAVE SUBSIDED -- NORMAL LIFE HAS RETURNED". (KUWAITI CABINET IS SCHEDULED TO DISCUSS THESE EVENTS IN ITS ROUTINE MEETING JANUARY 23.) THE KUWAIT PRESS, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN FILLED WITH NEWS STORIES AND EDITORIALS ON THE RIOTS, EVIDENCING A HIGH LEVEL OF INTEREST ON THE PART OF THE MEDIA PEOPLE HERE AND PROBABLY REFLECTING ACCURATELY CONSIDERABLE INTEREST AND CONCERN AMONG THE KUWAITI INTELLIGENSIA.

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2. SOME EDITORIALS LAID THE EGYPTIAN TROUBLES AT THE FEET OF ISRAEL AND THE "GREAT POWERS", WHO WERE SAID TO BE DELIBERATELY STARVING OUT THE EGYPTIAN PEOPLE (AL RAI AL AM, JANUARY 19) AND "EXPLOITING THE MASSES" BY MEANS OF, FOR EXAMPLE, BRANCHES OF AMERICAN BANKS IN EGYPT (KUWAIT TIMES, JANUARY 20). THE WILDEST CHARGE IN THIS VEIN WAS THAT OF AL WATAN OF JANUARY 22, WHICH INSISTED THAT THE EVENTS IN EGYPT WERE PLANNED AND EXECUTED BY THE

USG, SO AS TO KEEP EGYPT WEAK AND PREOCCUPIED, AND THEREFORE DELAY A GENEVA CONFERENCE. AL SIYASAH (JAN 22) ASSERTED THAT THE GOE MUST NOW REALIZE THAT "THE PRESENT ECONOMIC SET UP IN THE COUNTRY CANNOT FLOURISH THROUGH IMPORTS OF PEPSI COLA AND SEVEN UP . . ."

3. SEVERAL EDITORIALS STRUCK OUT DIRECTLY AT SADAT OR AT OIL RICH ARAB STATES, (WHICH WAS UNUSUAL FOR TIGHTLY CONTROLLED KUWAITI MEDIA, CAUTIONED AS IT IS BY THE GOK TO REFRAIN FROM ENGAGING IN INTRA-ARAB WORLD SQUABBLES). THE KUWAIT TIMES SAID SADAT'S VACILLATING ECONOMIC POLICIES WERE THE CAUSE OF THE UNREST (JAN 20), BUT IT LATER ASSERTED THAT THE OIL RICH ARAB STATES HAD BEEN TOO STINGY WITH THEIR AID TO EGYPT (JAN 22). AL ANBA OF JANUARY 22 CONCURRED IN THIS ASSESSMENT, URGING THE GOK AND OTHER ARAB GOVERNMENTS TO "RESCUE EGYPT AND "PROVIDE IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE". AL-SIYASAH, HOWEVER, WENT SO FAR AS TO ADVISE SADAT TO "ACCEPT THE RESIGNATION OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING THE PRIME MINISTER" AND TO REPLACE THE LATTER WITH AN "ECONOMIST".

4. COMMENT: IN VARIOUS OF THESE EDITORIALS AND OTHERS THERE WAS AN UNDERCURRENT OF CONCERN THAT UNREST IN EGYPT WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT THE ARAB POSITION GENERALLY. RESPONSIBLE KUWAITIS SHARE SADAT'S INTEREST IN A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT. THEY PROBABLY VIEW EVIDENCE OF WEAKNESS ON SADAT'S PART AS DECREASING THE PROSPECTS THAT MODERATE ARABS WILL CARRY THE DAY.
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